

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 23rd January 2012

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PORTFOLIO: Education and Children – Cllr Pantelic

PART I

FOR DECISION

PROGRESS REPORT: OFSTED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

1. Purpose of Report

To inform Cabinet of the progress to date following the outcome of the Ofsted announced inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children which took place between April 4th and 15th 2011, with the report published on June 1st 2011.

2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

Cabinet is requested to:

- a) Note the actions taken in the department and progress since the publication of the Ofsted report.
- b) Suggest any areas for further detailed scrutiny by the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel; or for further consideration by Cabinet.

3. Community Strategy Priorities

Celebrating diversity, enabling inclusion

- By identifying and prioritising services for vulnerable groups in the Slough Population, by targeting support to meet the needs of children and young people's identified needs and by ensuring that we build on the good and outstanding judgements in the Ofsted report and by addressing the areas for improvement.

Adding years to Life and Life to years

- Through focussing on the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people and their parents and carers in Slough, and providing targeted services through partnership working primarily with the NHS to secure measurable health improvements

Being Safe, Feeling Safe

- By offering effective support to families to help them do their best for their children so that children and young people are safe in their families and communities
- By recognising that parents are the main carers for their children, and by offering services that enable them to continue to care for their children successfully so that children can grow up within their own families and communities wherever possible
- By carrying out respective roles across the local authority and partner agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable children in our community are protected from harm and they are enabled to live with their families
- By carrying out our statutory role as a local authority to provide services for children in need, to safeguard them and look after children whose parents are unable to do so
- By working effectively with partner agencies so that they also contribute to safeguarding children and young people and demonstrate improved outcomes for those children and young people and their families
- By ensuring that children and young people who are looked after have the standards of care and life opportunities that we would want for our own children with contributions from all partner agencies

Prosperity for All

- By offering early education and family support to parents of young children so that they can focus on meeting their children's needs and overcoming personal and family difficulties that affect their ability to care for their children
- By promoting educational achievement which gives children and young people in care and leaving care enjoyment in learning and increased opportunities for success in adult life
- By maintaining high levels of Education, Employment and Training (EET) for young people who are looked after beyond 16 years of age.
- By promoting vulnerable young people's social and emotional development alongside advances in educational achievement
- By supporting local nursery providers to secure optimum standards so that parents and carers are able to secure economic prosperity/independence for themselves and their family.

4. Other Implications

a) Financial

Members are asked to note that the additional activity identified in the Improvement Plan will be resourced without impact on front line services in line with Ofsted requirements. The financial implications of the Safeguarding Improvement Plan are attached as Appendix 1.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy considered by the Improvement Board on 10.1.12 is available upon request.

b) Risk Management

The risk management schedule for the Improvement Plan considered by the Improvement Board on 10.01.12 is available upon request.

c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

The actions proposed in this report must be designed to comply with the human rights of the clients. Under Section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998, it is unlawful for the Council to act in a way which is incompatible with human rights or it could result in the Council being subject to judicial review. The actions proposed in this report are designed to comply with the Human Rights considerations of young people specifically Article 8 Human Rights Act 1998 (the right to respect for private and family life). There are no immediate legal implications arising from the report, however the Council should be aware that failure to comply with this Improvement Notice by the assessment date may lead to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families using statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the Council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the necessary and rapid improvements required in children's social care provision.

d) Equalities Impact Assessment

An equalities impact assessment is not required in relation to this information report.

e) Workforce

Information about work to improve the capability and capacity of the workforce is contained in Theme 2 of the Improvement Plan. A report to the Safeguarding Improvement Board on the progress of the Workforce Strategy is available upon request.

Children and Families staffing position and strategy for recruitment

The short and medium term strategies for staffing children's social care with the appropriate level and calibre of staff to deliver the requirements of the Improvement Plan are as follows:

The Performance Improvement and Quality Control project (in place from late August to November 2011) led to an evaluation of the number of staff required in each area of service, together with the skills and experience needed for that type of work. This needed to be tested as a working model, with a view to creating a sustainable structure for the delivery of children's social care services to ensure:

- Delivery of the Improvement Plan to required standards
- Teams which reflect the recommendations of the Munro report
- A separation between referral and assessment, child protection and children in need work; and the longer term needs of looked after children
- A mix of social work staff in each team
- Drawing in staff with new skills to tackle areas where practice needed considerable improvement, including at Assistant Team Manager level and senior practitioners to supplement supervisory capacity
- The planned use of skilled, experienced agency staff to support practice improvements and bring external expertise into the service

Children's Senior Management Team endorsed this approach, and agreed that the short term structure, including experienced agency practitioners and

managers, should be in place until the end of March 2012 pending the appointment of permanent post holders. The long term structure has been being agreed by the Councils Corporate Management Team and recruitment for Assistant Director, Heads of Service and Team Leaders will start in January.

Work is being carried out between January and March to revise job descriptions and recruit staff using a revised competencies and capabilities framework

There has been successful recruitment of some permanent newly qualified and experienced social workers in 2011. However, recent work to recruit permanent social workers drew a large number of applications from inexperienced or newly qualified workers, which could potentially have unbalanced the teams skills and experience mix, and senior managers took the decision to continue with more experienced agency workers for the life of the short term structure.

The long term structure will consist of an Assistant Director, three Heads of Service (fieldwork, looked after children and placements), and Team Leaders with small teams of social workers, senior practitioners and skilled administrators which fit with the recommendations of the Munro report. There will also be a Principal Social Child and Family Social Worker with a lead responsibility for practice. Placement and Services for Children with Disabilities will remain in a similar configuration to the present structure.

The current staffing position in fieldwork service is described in the table below.

Post type	Establishment	Filled by	Actual Vacancies (ie not filled by an agency or permanent worker)	Permanent Establishment Vacancies	Change since April 11
Group Manager	2	1 permanent 1 agency	0	1	0
Team Manager	3	1 permanent 1 agency	1	2	+1
Assistant Team Manager	8	3 permanent 5 agency	0	5	+3
Social Workers	48	36 permanent 10 agency	2	12	+9

5. Supporting Information

5.1 Background

The Ofsted report of June 1st 2011 graded Slough as 'inadequate' for safeguarding and 'adequate' for looked after children following the announced inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children in April 2011.

Following the Ofsted outcome, Cllr Anderson, as Leader of the Council received a letter from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families issuing an improvement notice to address the issues raised in the Inspection. The next step was to establish an Improvement Board, which meets approximately two-monthly, to track the progress of the improvements in safeguarding; and to draw up an Improvement Plan which was approved by the Minister on 23rd November 2011. Support for the implementation of some aspects of the Improvement Plan is provided through a national Sector Support Project.

Reports to Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 9th June, 5th September, 12th October, 24th November 2011, and 24th January 2012 give details of the work carried out to date.

Monthly updates are given to Commissioners and Members.

Two extraordinary Council meetings were held on 19th December 2011 and 1st June 2011.

5.2 The Improvement Board

The Improvement Board's role is to:

- provide challenge and scrutiny to ensure full compliance with the Ofsted recommendations outlined in the Safeguarding and Looked After Children announced inspection report published in June 2011
- ensure actions listed in the improvement notice issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in July 2011 are carried out and report progress to the Minister through the Chair of the Board
- ensure all agencies are held accountable for progress against their responsibilities and actions detailed in the Ofsted report and the Improvement Plan
- track the progress of the Improvement Plan across all partner agencies

The Improvement Board membership is:

- Independent Chair – Cheryl Miller
- Leader of the Council – Rob Anderson
- Commissioner for Education and Children's Services (Lead Member) - Natasa Pantelic
- Chief Executive Slough Borough Council – Ruth Bagley
- Chair of Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) – Paul Burnett
- Thames Valley Police Local Police Area Commander for Slough – Richard Humphrey

- Director of Commissioning Berkshire Cluster – Bev Searle
- School Representative – Gill Denham

In attendance:

- Rachael Davies – Department for Education
- Deborah Jenkins – Department for Education
- Alex Walters - Sector Led Support
- Fiona Johnson - Professional Adviser to the Chair
- Clair Pyper – Director of Education and Children’s Services

The Improvement Board met on 20th July 2011; 20th September 2011; 14th November 2011 and 10th January 2012.

5.3 The Improvement Plan

The Improvement Plan is based on the Ofsted recommendations following the inspection, the results of further work to identify areas requiring practice improvement and comments from the Improvement Board.

Work on the current version of the Improvement Plan began in August 2011, and was further refined following the receipt of the Improvement Notice from the Minister dated September 29th 2011. The Plan was approved by the Improvement Board at the meeting of 14th November.

The Plan was distributed to Members on 25th November, following the Minister’s letter dated 22nd November accepting the Chair’s progress report on the Plan. The Plan is also on the Council website, together with a plan summary; and Members have received communications from the Commissioner for Education and Children’s Services with information about the Plan, inviting questions and comments.

The Plan is divided into five themes. This report gives brief highlights from each team. The Plan, containing details of progress presented to the Improvement Board on 10th January is available upon request.

5.4 A summary of progress against Plan Themes

Theme 1 Social Care Practice

- The Quality Control and Performance Improvement Project, run by an external consultant, took place between late August and November 2011. The end result of the project was a Quality Assurance Framework for children’s social care. This is a core requirement to ensure that managers and practitioners across agencies are clear about their roles and responsibilities in supporting improvements and outcomes for children and young people. It acts as a form of management oversight to ensure that good safeguarding practice makes a difference in improving outcomes for children which includes:

- A schedule of activities i.e. audits, supervision and case monitoring and performance reports providing information for managers from SMT to operational level;
- Information about named individuals responsible for remedial action and themes arising from the QAF at all levels;
- Key documents that need to be in place – annual business/service plan, Learning & Development Plan;
- Frameworks for ensuring people are managed appropriately i.e. Supervision Policy and expectations; expectations of management oversight and the themes arising from that
- Standards and list of ‘Must do’s’ within children’s social care and across partner agencies to ensure expectation and service specifications meet requirements.

Staff have been involved in drawing up aspects of the QAF. As a result:

- There has been strong improvement in one key indicator as a result of a focus on practice – ‘Initial Assessments completed and authorised within the timescales’ shows a strong upward trend from October through to December.
 - Work on the second key indicator ‘Core Assessments completed within timescale’ will be slower to show improvement because it covers a 35 day period and is based on a yearly rolling average, but weekly monitoring demonstrates impact of changed processes and practice guidance and an upward trend in timeliness of completion from October to December.
 - Weekly checkpoint reports have been introduced to check key performance indicators, team workloads and themes arising in the service
 - Themes from the external and internal audit programmes are being used as part of the QAF to drive up performance
- There have also been internal organisational changes including a short term change in the deployment of staff outlined in 4 e) to increase capacity through separating the management of referral, assessment and child protection services from Looked After Children services.
 - A new, web based procedures manual is being developed for social workers and managers and will ‘go live’ in February 2012.
 - There was a ‘deep dive’ external audit of cases from July to October 2011; and also an internal audit programme which carries out ‘deep dive’ themed audits, and draws together information about ‘spot checks’ carried out by managers and Independent Reviewing Officers. Following the audit, any remedial action which needs to be taken in respect of individual children is carried out immediately, and the themes arising from the audits are used in supervision and training to continue improvement work. The external and internal audit programmes have found early signs of improvement in:
 - Reviewing cases, including child protection review conferences
 - Recording cases, including child protection core group recordings
 - Child visits, including frequency and child focus
 - The quality of new assessments

- The quality of planning
- Areas which continue to need improvement, demonstrated through audit work and senior management oversight include:
 - Consistency and quality of management oversight and supervision by Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers
 - Reflective and analytical casework and supervision
 - Work between child protection conferences to prevent planning ‘drift’ for children on child protection plans.
 - Reinforcement of the use of the risk assessment framework

These have been built into the training programme which is being commissioned, with the first line managers as the priority for immediate training.

All the work which is outlined above now has to be embedded and tested over coming months to ensure all staff are carrying out the required standards of practice.

Theme 2 Capacity and Capability

- Information about the current workforce, short and long term plans is detailed in 4 e).
- The training programme for current and new staff, based on identified needs from the Independent Audit, the ‘Childs Journey’, the Quality Control and Performance Improvement project, the social work health check and the Social Work Reform Board competences is being commissioned and put in place, with the first courses being delivered to managers in February.
- The staff communication plan which is in place is intended to help build staff engagement, commitment and morale, and to encourage them to give feedback and ideas as part of their contribution to the Improvement Plan. This includes written weekly briefings, face to face staff briefings, and meetings with groups of staff to explore their contribution to the Improvement Plan and improving outcomes for children in Slough.

Theme 3 Quality Assurance and Performance Management

- Sector support work has included a project to examine the use of performance management information at all levels; and workshops for practitioners and managers are being held in the w/c 9.1.12.
- Management of the Independent Reviewing Officer service has been moved to the Director to strengthen their challenge role and their ability to hold practitioners and managers across SBC and partner organisation to account; additional sector led specialist support has been agreed to carry out an external review of the Independent Reviewing Officers ; IRO Standards are in place and being used and the escalation procedures are being used systematically; the Children’s Participation Officer has gathered the views of parents and children to be used with staff in improvement work.
- The sector support project to review the IRO service has been delayed until January due to the unavailability of the person leading on that because of an Ofsted inspection.

- Paul Burnett has been appointed as Interim Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) , pending a permanent appointment by April 2012.
- The Sector Support project on the LSCB has made a series of recommendations for the Improvement Board and the LSCB to consider and implement, and these were discussed at an LSCB Development Day on 6.1.12.

Theme 4 Early Intervention and Prevention

- Early Intervention (EI) and Prevention Sector Support Work produced an interim report for consideration by the Improvement Board (IB). This highlighted the importance of the role of partner organisations in the provision of early intervention services; and has led to two sessions (one in December, one in January) where partners can plan the implementation of the Early Intervention Strategy, and their specific input to these key services. This will also require a review of the thresholds for eligibility for service, which currently focus on the criteria for access to children's social care services and need to be expanded to include early intervention services, and the expectation on partner agencies to offer help and support to children, young people and their families.
- The Early Response Hub continues to offer support to children, young people and families who are not eligible for children's social care. This continues to be offered mainly through the local authority, and needs a greater degree of partner contribution.

Theme 5 Leadership, Governance and Finance

- SMT receive fortnightly reports on performance, and triangulate this with other information from the checkpoint reports, with a clear request for action plans in the case of performance indicators that are causing concern.
- A strong emphasis on activities that support changed ways of working for practitioners and managers has been developed, supported by the Communications Plan and this will help ensure that staff are involved in and supportive of any changes
- For details of the LSCB work see Theme 3
- The Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14 will be presented to the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 24th January 2012
- A review of the roles and functions of the Children's Partnership Board has started.
- A medium term financial strategy showing past and future spending on safeguarding and looked after children was presented to the Board on 10th January 2012 and is available upon request
- Risks against the delivery of the Improvement Plan have been analysed and are being regularly reviewed. Project management arrangements are in place.

5.5 Sector Led Support

The sector led support is based on the Improvement Plan, and will consist of the following:

- a. Support for the Director and Lead Member

- b. A review of early intervention and prevention work
- c. A review of the LSCB and partnership working arrangements
- d. A review of quality assurance and performance management arrangements
- e. A review of the IRO service

Work has started on all five areas, and reports presented to the Board with findings and recommendations on Early Intervention and Prevention, and the LSCB. All recommendations are being used in the next stages of the delivery of the Improvement Plan.

5.6. Local Safeguarding Children Board

Paul Burnett has been appointed as Interim Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and will act as Chair until the appointment of a permanent Chair by April 2012.

6 Conclusion

Cabinet are requested to note the contents of the report and identify any specific areas to be followed up at future meetings of Cabinet or the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel, or with the Member representatives on the Improvement Board.

7. Appendices Attached

Appendix 1: Financial Implications of the Improvement Plan

8 Background Papers

Extraordinary Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 13th January 2010. Agenda item 2: 'Safeguarding in Slough: the Work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board'

Extraordinary Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 22nd April 2010. Agenda Item 2: 'Safeguarding in the Health Service'

Item 3 'Child Protection and the Independent Reviewing Service'

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 23rd June 2010. Agenda Item 8 'Implications of the Rise in the Numbers of Vulnerable Children 2008-10'

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 25th November 2010:
Agenda Item 3

'Ofsted inspection, Contact Referral and Assessment Arrangements October 2010'. Agenda Item 4 'Safeguarding in Slough – Update on the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board'.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 25th January 2011:
Agenda item 3: 'Ofsted Annual Children's Services Assessment 2010'.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 9th June 2011: Agenda item 10: Ofsted report on the Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 5th September 2011:
Agenda item 4: Ofsted report on the Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 12th October 2011:
Agenda item 5: Ofsted report on the Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 24th November 2011:
Agenda item 5: Ofsted report on the Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 24th January: Agenda item
*: Ofsted report on the Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children

Ofsted report on the announced inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services June 2011

Improvement Plan presented to the Improvement Board on 10th January 2012
<http://sbcinsite.ad.slough.gov.uk/5553.aspx>

The following papers are available on request from Democratic Services, Victoria King, 01753 (87) 5120.

Medium Term Financial Strategy presented to the Improvement Board on 10th January 2012

Risk Management Framework presented to the Improvement Board on 10th January 2012

Workforce Strategy presented to the Improvement Board on 10th January 2012